

**Press release from the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine
24th March 2011
For Immediate release**

**Campaigners withdraw threat to picket Israeli Music conference after
organisers confirm “No Israeli funding”**

Groups campaigning for Palestinian human rights have declared that a conference on Israeli music is “no longer a priority for boycott”.

The conference “Art Musics of Israel: Identities, Ideologies, Influences” is being organised by the Jewish Music Institute (JMI), from 28th to 31st March. Some of its events are being held at SOAS, University of London.

Original publicity material for the conference had acknowledged support from the Israeli Embassy, London, and the British Israeli Arts Training Scheme (BI ARTS), “a British Council initiative in partnership with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Sport in Israel”. The British Friends of the Hebrew University was also mentioned.

Consequently the British Committee for the Universities of Palestine (BRICUP), Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods (J-BIG) and the Boycott Israel Network (BIN) all called for the conference to be boycotted. They prepared a letter to be sent to all those taking part, whether as speakers, session chairs or performers.

This decision was communicated to the Conference organisers, and a strong statement opposing the holding of the event was signed by distinguished practitioners from many musical fields. (See text below).

However, in correspondence with the protesters, Geraldine Auerbach, the head of the Jewish Music Institute, stated "I confirm that there is no funding directly or indirectly from the Israeli Government or institutions". Subsequently all reference to the Israeli-related organisations was removed from the conference's online publicity materials. Similarly Ms Auerbach, who had stated in the Jewish Chronicle that the Israeli Embassy was helping to promote the Conference, now stated that no such promotion had taken place.

After some further discussion and clarification, the protestors declared that although they still had strong concerns about the conference, they would not be picketing it and would no longer be writing to participants.

Please reply to: BRICUP, BM BRICUP, London WC1N3XX

email: bricup@bricup.org.uk
www.bricup.org.uk

The Palestinian Campaign for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) states “the Palestinian boycott call targets cultural institutions, projects and events that continue to serve the purposes of the Israeli colonial and apartheid regime”.

Reem Kelani, Palestinian singer and musician, said: “It is a stain on SOAS' stature as an institution of academic excellence to host a conference which seeks to deny the existence of a Palestinian cultural narrative and whose primary purpose is to present a politically shaped Israeli musical history.”

Prof. Jonathan Rosenhead of BRICUP said: “Clearly the event has been formulated in close contact with the Israeli authorities, so that its programme and structure serve the Brand Israel agenda. Nonetheless we acknowledge that the organisers have now stated unambiguously that no Israeli funding or support has been received, even if they did change their story several times during our campaign.”

Deborah Fink, a professional soprano and founder member of J-BIG, said: "This is a victory for the BDS movement, and we continue to step up our campaign until Israel ends the occupation of the West Bank and the siege of Gaza and Palestinians are given their equality and human rights."

PACBI and the British organisations are in agreement that the conference remains “completely boycottable”. Although the campaigners have withdrawn their threat to picket or disrupt it, they are still intending to give out leaflets at some of the events pointing out the impossibility of holding an equivalent conference on Palestinian music because of the Israeli occupation.

Notes to Editors

1. The Palestinian Call for Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel can be read at: <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=869>

More detailed guidelines on how the cultural boycott should be applied can be read at: <http://pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1047>

2. Text of the original statement opposing the conference:

“As musicians we are dismayed that the forthcoming conference on Art Musics of Israel (28-31 March), hosted by the School of Oriental and African Studies and the Jewish Music Institute, is to be supported by Israeli state institutions – namely the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Sport, as well as their London Embassy. The reason for this support is all too clear: the conference fits snugly into the state’s ‘Brand Israel’ campaign to draw a liberal, cultured veil over a brutish reality.

“That reality is decades of illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, contempt for international law, deadly assaults on Lebanon, on Gaza, and on a humanitarian aid flotilla, the continuing siege of Gaza, and the deliberate and wholesale disruption of Palestinian social, economic and cultural life.

“Music should not be enlisted as a cover-up for these ongoing crimes. We oppose this conference and urge other musicians not to participate in any way.”

Signed by over 20 prominent musicians

3. For further information contact:

music@bricup.org.uk

4. BRICUP's website is at: www.bricup.org.uk